

Two outspoken conservative Republicans promised Wednesday to challenge any earmarks Ways and Means Chairman Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.) requests for a center that bears his name.

Republican Reps. John Campbell of California and Jeff Flake of Arizona issued a release vowing to strip any congressionally directed funds that are steered to the Charles B. Rangel Center for Public Service at the City College of New York.

"This project was bad enough when we thought it was just one earmark," Flake said, "but this appears to be an ongoing effort to milk federal taxpayers."

Rangel is the scorn of conservatives and government watchdog groups after the Washington Post reported earlier this week that the powerful Ways and Means chairman has solicited donations from companies and individuals with business before his committee.

Campbell challenged Rangel in a spirited dust-up on the House floor last year when the California conservative offered an amendment to a year-end government-funding package that would have stripped \$1,950,000 the New York Democrat had requested for the center. During their exchange, Rangel joked that Campbell had not been in the House long enough to deserve a research center named in his honor. The House defeated Campbell's amendment, 316-108.

"Last year, 316 Members of Congress voted against our amendment to stop an earmark for Charlie Rangel's 'Monument to Me,'" Campbell said. "The question now remains whether these members will continue to enable Rangel's bad behavior."

In 2006, Rangel secured a \$450,000 earmark for the center in a spending bill to fund the departments of Transportation, Treasury and Housing and Urban Development. That money was directed to "the planning, design, and construction of the Center for Public Service," according to the release from Campbell and Flake. He also received another \$245,000 earmark for the same purposes in last year's government funding measure.

According to the Post, Rangel has also used office letterhead to solicit donations for the center.

The center is being created to encourage ethnic minorities to get involved in politics.

The garrulous 78-year-old Ways and Means chair has had a rough run of late; last week, the New York Times reported that Rangel rents four apartments in an upscale Harlem high-rise at below-market rates. Rangel initially defended the rate he pays for these rent-controlled apartments just a few blocks from where he was born. But he has since reportedly decided to vacate one that was listed as a campaign office.

A spokesman for House Republican Leader John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) said his boss would like

the ethics committee to review these reported solicitations.

"Using taxpayer resources to solicit contributions for Mr. Rangel's taxpayer-financed 'monument-to-me' may in fact violate House rules and the Ethics Committee has a responsibility to look into it," Boehner spokesman Kevin Smith said. "Mr. Boehner believes the Ethics Committee should review his actions to determine whether an official investigation is warranted.